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NSC BRIEFING

2 December 1955

POLITICAL SITUATION  
FRENCH ELECTIONS

- PRESIDENTIAL
- I. The decree dissolving the French National Assembly, became effective on 2 December, DESPITE THE FACT THAT ACTION NOW MEANS THE ELECTIONS MAY WELL HAVE TO BE HELD DURING THE HOLIDAYS
- A. Premier Faure ruled out further delay in order to nullify attempts by Mendes-France to convoke the Assembly, AND (AND POSSIBLY MAKE TROUBLE FOR HIM)
- NOMINALLY B. The opposition wanted to consider electoral reform, THE ASSEMBLY TO MEET AGAIN IN ORDER but Faure feared a POSSIBLE censure motion which would oust him, LAW AND HAVE THEREBY BLOCKED THE DISSOLUTION OF THE ASSEMBLY
- C. Elections are now likely to be held on New Year's Day (to comply with the constitutional provision (WHICH REQUIRES NEW ELECTIONS) within (AFTER DISSOLUTION) 20-30 days, but means to defer them to 8 January are being sought.

- II. In the meantime, Faure intends to fight his (1 DEC.) FOUSTER from the Radical Socialist Party.
- A. The Party (AND ACTION WILL PROBABLY BE SUPPORTED BY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE) steering committee, has voted his exclusion,
- B. Mendes-France, WHO controls the Party machinery, and is attempting to maneuver Faure out of (ALSO) (ANOTHER POST, THE) presidency of "Rally of the Republican Left, which links the small Democratic (UDSR) Resistance Union with the Radical Socialists.
- C. FAURE WILL DEFEND HIMSELF BEFORE THE PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
- D. Even if Faure is ousted from the party, FAURE he will not there- by be cut off from all Radical Socialist support, SINCE PARTY "DISCIPLINE" IS TRADITIONALLY WEAK

III. The 1951 single-ballot electoral law will be used.

- (IN THE JAN '56 ELECTIONS) A. This provides for party lists in each OF FRANCE'S 90 departments, which are 5 is the electoral districts, and permits the parties to "af- filiate" (in order to have their votes counted as a unit)

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NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐

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~~1. The eight most heavily populated of the 90 departments are divided into more than one electoral district.~~

B. Any single-party slate or "affiliated" slate that obtains an absolute majority gets all the seats <sup>FOR THAT</sup> in the Department.  
(IN THE ABSENCE OF A MAJORITY.)

1. Otherwise, the seats are allotted by proportional representation.

C. Since it is virtually impossible for <sup>ANY</sup> one party to obtain an absolute majority, electoral alliances will be resorted to.

~~1. They will be less extensive than in 1951.~~

ALTHOUGH <sup>1951</sup>  
D. The law was originally designed to minimize Communist and Gaullist representation, <sup>IT</sup> but is now expected to help the Communists, BECAUSE OF ANTICIPATED PCF "ALLIANCES" WITH SOCIALISTS, AS WELL AS BECAUSE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION FAVORS THE PCF.  
IV. Too early to make any predictions on the outcome of French <sup>elections</sup>.

JAN elections.

A. "Alliances" are less clear, at this point, than in 1951.

They will be made largely on local issues:

(B) 1. The Communists are expected to form some "alliances" with the Socialists, with each group picking up about 10 percent more seats (about 110 each, in the <sup>PREDICTION</sup> opinion of the National Assembly president).

(C) 2. The Independents are expected to make the greatest gains, largely at the expense of the Gaullists. They will ally mostly with the Popular Republicans and the Radicals, despite Mendes-France's desires to limit Radical "alliances" largely to the Socialists.

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(D)

There is little likelihood of Communist participation in the government formed following the election.

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